Allan Trail Leaders. 1941

THE ANIMAL PEOPLES' TRIP TO THE PACIFIC COAST

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Preface

The following legend is one of the Thompson Indian tales of mythological times. It took place when the territory, now British Columbia, was ruled over by Animal People.

These Animal Folk possessed the power of both man and animal and were considered very clever. Their leaders on earth were Mr. and Mrs. Coyote, and Mr. Coyote's three brothers. They resided where Lytton, British Columbia, now is.

The Animal Folk supposedly inhabited British Columbia prior to the Man Age. They remained four thousand years on earth. At the end of their earthly sojourn the Father of Mysteries transformed them into everlasting stone figures on nearby hills or mountains, and are still visible today. Mr. and Mrs. Coyote were recalled back to heaven, and Mr. Coyote's three brothers were transformed into three great nations of men.

The story in the accompanying pages took place after the Animal People had resided two thousand years on earth.

The illustrations for the tale were made by Reynold Smith, a twelve-year-old Indian boy whose home is at False Creek, near Boothroyd, B.C., and who is now a pupil at St. George's Indian Residential School, Lytton, B.C.

Noel Stewart

Lytton, B.C.

May, 1941. Author.

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The Animal Peoples' Trip to the Pacific Coast

IN the year two thousand two of the Animal-Peoples' lives they visited the Pacific Coast. In the year two thousand of their lives, a terrible flood had covered British Columbia and the Father of Mysteries sent his Sea Ruler, Mr. See-see-utl, up to the high mountain near where Lytton, B.C., now is, to meet Mr. Coyote. This was the first meeting of the ruler of Salt Water with the ruler of the Animal Folk. Such a happy meeting it was too, and it was on this occasion that the Animal People received their invitation to visit the sea shore, now known as Vancouver, B.C.

When Mr. See-see-utl visited Mr. and Mrs. Coyote during the terrible flood, he found them taking refuge on Mount Ki-ko. In rowing over from the sea it is said that he followed a course as the bird would fly, since the whole Fraser Valley was submerged in water. And, on the day of his visit the flood was at its worst and reached level with Mount Ki-ko—the highest elevation of the Fraser Valley. It was a sad day, too, as the last of the Animal People who failed to get high enough up the mountain were that morning drowned. However, many close associates of Mr. Coyote who accepted his wise council, were safely protected on the mountain.

But, it is said, that with all the discomforts, Mrs. Coyote went about cheering all the lady folk she could find. Her two powerful eagles, Sir Dobbin and Sir Gordon, were always near her and transported her on their backs to any spot she might care to go.

With her, too, she always carried her coiled magic basket kettle, which could perform miracles. It was her gift from the Father of Mysteries before she left the heavens, and remained a faithful protector for four thousand years.

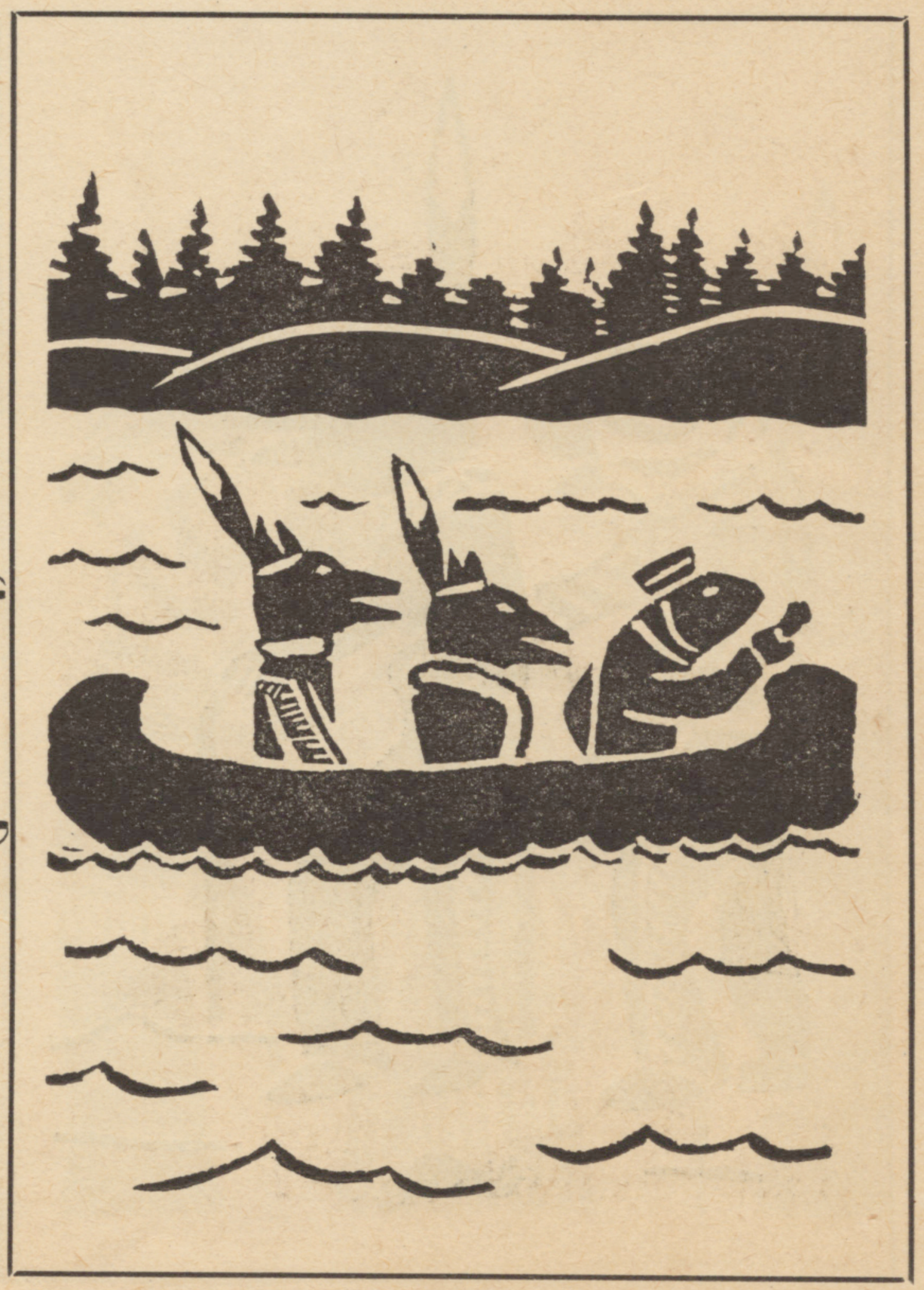
So the days passed and the flood began to recede and after sixty days the Animal People were able to descend into the lower Fraser once more. How sad most felt as they looked over the waste lands of the Fraser Valley, yet they knew it was the wish of the Father of Mysteries, and were comforted by the promise he had made to them, that within three months the Fraser Valley would be green once more. This promise he fulfilled and a building programme for new homes began at once. Mr. Coyote selected the Beaver Men as the chief architects and constructors, and before the summer was over a new village for the Animal People had been erected.

Building the New Home.

It must be remembered things moved quickly in the time of the Animal People. Children grew to maturity in three months; and valleys, rivers and trees could change in the twinkling of an eye, if it were the will of the Father of Mysteries. Everything living possessed a soul in the time of the Animal Folk.

So in the winter of two thousand one of the Animal Peoples' lives, great preparations were in hand for their western trip. By May 25, of two thousand two a convoy of Salmon Men arrived up the Fraser, sent by Mr. See-see-utl to guide the party down the rapid and dangerous river. But it was a jolly excursion, and reports say the loving Animal People enjoyed every second of the trip. The river was rough at that period of the year, too, but Mrs. Coyote cheered timid Mrs. Rabbit Lady and the reserved Mrs. Porcupine Lady so much that even the meekest of the Animal Folk forgot the dangerous waters.

All Headed for Vancouver.



At high noon of the second day the party reached the spot where Hope, B.C., is now, and it was here that two dwarf ladies presented Mrs. Coyote with a magic walking cane. How happy Mrs. Coyote was over this! On a number of occasions these dwarf ladies had done valuable work in notifying Mrs. Coyote of the whereabouts of the Giant Men who were the enemies of the Animal People, and who often tried to creep up silently and kill them.

The following day the party reached the mouth of the Fraser River, where they were welcomed royally by Mr. See-see-utl and his chief advisor, Mr. Nat-nees Man, together with their wives. Such a glorious welcome it was, and Mrs. Coyote wept with joy as two quails and eight golden choir birds from heaven sang a song of welcome from the tip of the canoe just as Mr. and Mrs. Coyote shook hands with the dignitaries of the sea.

Mr. Coyote and Mr. See-see-utl Out Walking.

Not long after this the procession headed towards the spot where Vancouver now is, and it is said that it was the grandest procession ever to have sailed the inland waters. Every diplomat of the Sea was there, and the Animal Folk all remarked that everything far exceeded their expectation. The sea air and the balmy breezes delighted Mrs. Coyote. Many times she leaned out of the canoe to touch the salt water, while to Mrs. Beaver Lady and Mrs. Bear Lady the beauty of it all appeared like a dream.

That evening the party gathered on the shore and held the largest feast ever to have occurred among the folk of the Sea and Land. Far into the night many speakers gave welcome to the strangers from the inland regions, yet how happy they were. The Animal Folk were overwhelmed with joy and remarked how sorry they were that they lived two thousand and two years without visiting their Sea friends.

Mrs. Coyote Receives her Seal-skin Coat.

So the days passed, with every minute full of joy. Mrs. Coyote found no end of comfort in talking to Mrs. See-see-utl and Mrs. Salmon, nor forgetting the busy Mrs. Nat-nees, who was always as businesslike as her husband, Mr. Nat-nees, secretary to Mr. See-see-utl. Each afternoon and evening was full of activities, and before the Animal People realized it a week had passed by. Wednesday of the week was "Ladies' Day", when all the women gathered in the park to discuss many problems of their lives. What a jolly time they all had! At the close of the meeting Mrs. See-see-utl, whose home was far up the Coast, presented Mrs. Coyote with a beautiful sealskin coat, and Mrs. Nat-nees presented her with a necklace of one thousand assorted pearls collected throughout the ocean. These priceless gifts were too much for Mrs. Coyote and she wept as she tried to thank her kind friends.

"Never before," she began, "have I been so honoured, excepting the day I received my Magic Kettle from the Father of Mysteries in heaven", she was overcome by her tears of gratitude and could not continue.

Saturday saw many sad hearts departing homeward up the Fraser River. Mr. Coyote, in addressing a group of the Sea Folk before his departure, said, "This trip has been one that will remain engraved on our minds for many generations, and though it is not the wish of the Father of Mysteries that we meet again, yet we have this week made a tie between the land and sea which will never be broken."

These word were so true. Never again did the Animal People visit the Sea Folk. Yet it is said that all remained mutually interested in each other to the end of their days.

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